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Letter, Sinclair Lewis to Ida Compton [November 21, 1948]

Sinclair Lewis

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ROMA

Sunday November 21

Dear Ida: As to your coming over: dear child, come, any time you want to, of course, and you'll be clamorously welcomed. This is not only the first letter I have written to anyone at all since I left Thorvald Farm, but it is also the first time I have touched a typewriter! It has been a wonderful time, but I have been so lazy, so full of inertia after about 3 years of unbroken labor that I have been good for nothing, and I haven't even made a start on the 10 short articles I am supposed to do for the North American Newspaper Alliance. But now, perhaps, I'll get to work. I shall have written on the whole trip.

Your letter came in on Friday, five days after it was written -- probably it had taken less than that, because I didn't go to the American Express for mail for a couple of days. It was so dear and welcome! Next time, tell me how everything is at the farm, whether and where Joseph has gone, and whether San has yet rented the farm. (It's going to take me a while to master this new portable typewriter.)

This has been perhaps the best trip I ever had abroad, and Mrs. Powers -- who has the most astonishing courage, flexibility, courage -- has been in a daze of delight; everything so much more exciting and beautiful than she had expected, and accommodations so much more comfortable. We have not had one bad meal since we left New York and most of them have been delights. I'm not sure but that Italian cooking is better than French. Anyway, I realize that the reason I have been supposing at home that I didn't care for food was because most cooking in America (decidedly including Joseph's bored routine) is so bad. If I stay here I shall become fat -- and grow a beard, as becomes an aged author.

Rome is so beautiful -- the contrasts of mediaeval palaces, rich dark red, bulking in dignity; very modern streets with smart shops (yes, you can get anything you want here, including all the American drug store things that everybody insisted I must take along) and with a fever of traffic and the well-to-do Italian men and women wonderfully dressed; the horribly poor sections with alleys like a knife edge; and then miles of Roman ruins going back to 600 B.C. -- maybe 1000 B.C. -- nobody really knows.

The steamer was perfect -- we did not have so much as an hour of rough weather. We stayed a week in Naples, that exciting many-voiced port towering on sharp hills above the Mediterranean, and saw Sorrento and Pompeii, of course. Here we'll stay a few more weeks, then on to Sienna, Assisi, Florence, Lucca, Perugia. Home? Maybe early May.

We talk of you all the time though, no, I don't think either of us has been ~~homesick~~ homesick at all. One reason is that there was an excellent bunch on the ship and ~~so here in Rome.~~

As to your coming over: dear child, come, any time, if you want to, of course, and you'll be clamorously welcome. But, though prices here are much cheaper than in N.Y., it will, flying T&A, cost you so much that it will take you years to make up for it; and I have no idea where we might be when you got here maybe! In some slightly dull town in the North; I'd put it off till you can really stay a few months - especially in this vast, rather awing city. I haven't even made a station for the North American Newspaper. This will probably have been the longest letter I shall have written on the whole trip. Typing after so many years seems to lack charm for me.

Your letter came yesterday. It was written -- probably it had taken less than that, because I didn't go to the American Express for mail for a couple of days. It was so dear and welcome! Next time, tell me how everything is at the farm, whether and where Joseph has gone, and whether Sam has yet rented the farm. It's going to take me a while to master this (typewriter).

This has been perhaps the best trip I ever had abroad. The only address you need for me now is: Mrs. Power: 11-12, rue de la Paix, Paris. I have been in a daze of rage, flexibility, courage -- has been in a daze of delight; everything so different than she had expected, and accommodations so much more comfortable than I had. I'll see Bill and Mary and Perkins since we left New York and me? I'm not sure but that Italian cooking is better than French. Anyway, I realize that the reason I have been supposing at home that I didn't care for food was because most cooking in America (decidedly including Joseph's bored routine) is so bad. If I stay here I shall become fat -- and grow a beard, as become an aged author.

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